



THE GREAT CALAVERAS RELIEF LOTTERY

by *Bonnie Miller*

The State of California and the County of Calaveras were born in the boom of the great gold rush. Shortly thereafter mining diminished as new lodes were discovered elsewhere and populations decreased as miners moved on. Calaveras County began to face the typical budget woes that most government agencies are eventually confronted with. After their prosperous birth in the gold rush, just twenty years later Calaveras County found itself short of the necessary finances to fund the most basic services. In the late 1870's a popular scheme of selling lottery tickets for "relief" was sweeping the country. These lotteries promised big prizes and

almost sure returns. Calaveras County embraced this idea enthusiastically. The results were far from the expectations. Rather than enjoy financial freedom as promised, the entire scheme almost brought fiscal ruin upon the county with repercussions reaching as far as the state legislature.

In the late 1860's mine production was declining and Calaveras County experienced a drop in the overall population. The prosperous conditions of the early gold rush were slowing down and easy financing was not as readily available. As early as 1857 Calaveras County had sought fiscal relief by conducting bond issues. The county had aggressively

200,000 Tickets 1 of \$20,000 1 of \$15,000 1 of \$12,000 1 of \$10,000 1 of \$7,500 1 of \$5,000 1 of \$3,500 1 of \$2,500	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> \$250,000 \$250,000 </div> <h3 style="margin: 0;">GRAND MUSICAL FESTIVAL</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">TO BE HELD AT THE FOR Court House, SAN ANDREAS, Cal. THE</p> <h4 style="margin: 0;">RELIEF OF CALAVERAS COUNTY.</h4> <p style="margin: 0;">On Monday, September 11, 1871, By the Calaveras County Relief Association.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">This Ticket entitles the holder to admission and to any prize that may be awarded to it. } Tickets \$2.50 each, Gold Coin.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> S. L. Prindle, <small>President.</small> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> 7662 </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> M. G. Lewis, <small>Set'y of Board of Managers.</small> </div> </div>	1 8 7 1. 25 of \$1,000 ⁰⁰ 25 of 500 ⁰⁰ 50 of 250 ⁰⁰ 200 of 100 ⁰⁰ 800 of 50 ⁰⁰ 1000 of 25 ⁰⁰ 1500 of 20 ⁰⁰ 3450 of 10 ⁰⁰ <hr/> Total Gold Gifts \$250,000
6,558 PRIZES		

A reproduction of the ticket from the famous "Relief of Calaveras" lottery scheme of 1871. An original such ticket was found circa 1960 by Mr. Harry Hengen of San Andreas while he was working on the American Hotel building. That discovery prompted an initial study into this subject by noted Calaveras County historian Judge Smith. Original newspaper material for this article was provided by the Calaveras County archives.

constructed costly improvements such as the County Hospital and the Big Tree Road with funds garnered from bond measures. By 1870 the bond debt just for the construction of the Big Tree Road was \$250,000.

Calaveras County had steadily increased the tax rate. By 1871 the tax rate was \$4.60 per \$100 of assessed value. This was a steep tax indeed. Today in the year 2000 Calaveras County residents only pay approximately \$1.00 per \$100 of value. The high taxes served to drive even more people to move out of the county only further reducing tax revenue and compounding the county debt.

On February 19, 1870 the state legislature passed the Mercantile Library Lottery Act which repealed certain restrictions on the Lottery Act of 1851. The new act allowed an extremely limited lottery for the Mercantile Library of the city and county of San Francisco only. This limited lottery instead served to revive an interest in the sport. In 1870 many small communities in California conducted relief lotteries. Nevada City conducted an apparently successful lottery under the ostensible purpose of providing debt relief for its school district. The city of Yreka was conducting one by the end of the year, and the city of Marysville wished to follow suit. The *Weekly Calaveras Chronicle* observed on November 19, 1870, that the legal lottery scheme in San Francisco "... has revived the gambling mania in this State to an alarming extent. Lotteries are being organized all over the country, under every possible pretext, and no trouble seems to be experienced in disposing of tickets". Later the paper bluntly asked "Why don't some one institute a lottery for the benefit of this County?"

The lotteries were by no means a proven success everywhere. Rather, there was much heated speculation that the lotteries were no more than a scam or just another ill form of gambling. There were still unresolved issues regarding the constitutionality of the Mercantile Library Act. In December of 1870 the Sate Supreme Court decided that the Act had not repealed the general law against lotteries and in fact lotteries were still illegal in California. But a fever was spreading fast, and popular opinion was willing to overlook legality, especially when it was for a good cause. Calaveras County's renegade sentiment was obvious as expressed by the *Calaveras Chronicle* when it claimed that "... we don't propose to ask the permission of the Legislature... The people of other localities are getting up lotteries for local purposes, and thus far there has been no interference by the authorities. We have as

much license to infringe the law as others and we do not believe any one would oppose a scheme having for its object the payment of a debt that can never be liquidated in any other manner. Give us the lottery."

In March of 1871 the Board of Supervisors issued a "Statement of County Indebtedness". This statement detailed the imbalance between funds available, and funds necessary to run the county for another year. The expenditures for the year were estimated to be **\$25,635**. These were primarily to run the County Hospital (\$5000) and the County Jail (\$2000), to provide various services such as Elections (\$960), and pay various salaries (Sheriff, \$3800; Clerk, \$2000; Assessor, \$1500; Treasurer, \$1200; School Superintendent, \$600; and Road Commissioner, \$400; etc.). Property taxes were estimated to produce **\$7750**. Revenues were also expected from other taxes and fees for an anticipated additional **\$10,725**. These other revenues were from traders', liquor, broker, and bridge licenses; poll and hospital taxes; and sheriff and clerk's fees. The property taxes and revenues totaled \$18,475, which was still far short of the \$25,635 of expenditures anticipated for the year, plus the hefty bond payments that were due.

The residents were upset with the high taxes. The Board of Supervisors was distraught over the responsibility of having to meet the bond interest payments and continue to provide routine services without having adequate funds. The supervisors realized that they would have to resort to drastic measures to save the county from bankruptcy. The time was ripe for a risky venture like a lottery to look appealing. In the conclusion of the "Statement of County Indebtedness", the Supervisors offered these final words which illuminated their desperation:

"From the statement of our general indebtedness and this showing of the amount necessary to meet the current expenses of the county, it will be seen that some extraordinary measures will have to be resorted to to relieve the people from the burden with which they are oppressed. To increase the rate of taxes would not only be oppressive, but nearly ruinous, to every business interest. We see no other remedy than to follow the fashion of the times, get up a lottery scheme for the relief of the county, and pay its debt."

The statement was submitted by the three Supervisors in office at that time, S. L. Prindle of Mokelumne Hill, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors; A. H. Coulter, Supervisor of the 2nd District; and M. G. Lewis, Supervisor of the 3rd District; dated March 22d, 1871.

The plan was to establish a team which inspired “confidence in the management” of the scheme. The voters of each township were to select two “reliable tax payers” for the purpose of “selecting suitable men to be the business managers in conducting the scheme to its conclusion”. The Board of Supervisor’s statement called for the first meeting to be held the 27th day of March, 1871, in San Andreas, which was only two days after it appeared in the newspaper. Immediately thereafter the *Chronicle* printed a correction, as the date should have been set for the 3rd day of April. The *Chronicle* was quick to point out that the error was not theirs, but blame lay with the Board of Supervisors who had provided inaccurate copy of the notice. Was this early mistake an omen of bad things to come?

The inaugural meeting was held on April 3rd, and the representatives of the townships adopted a rule whereby each township would have two votes on all questions requiring a vote. They selected William Wells of Mokelumne Hill, Alexander Wylie of San Andreas, and B. R. Prince of Altaville as the Business Managers, under the supervision of the District Judge, the County Judge, and the Board of Supervisors.

In the same newspaper (*Calaveras Chronicle*, April 8, 1871) that the minutes of that meeting were printed, ironically there also appears a letter from the District Judge promptly removing his name from that supervisory committee to which he had been appointed without his consent. Judge A. C. Adams asked of the paper, “Would you be kind enough to permit me, through the columns of your paper, to say that such action was entirely unauthorized by me, and consequently improper.” The judge tried to save face for his friends by observing that there must have been no offense intended by such upstanding people, but he clearly states that “... I, of course, decline any connection with the proceedings.” Shortly after the initial meeting Mr. Wells resigned from the Board of Managers, and J. F. Treat was appointed to fill the vacancy. A week later County Judge James Barclay returned from San Francisco to read the minutes of the initial meeting and discovered that he too had been appointed to the supervisory committee without his consent. He also printed a formal public withdrawal from the project: “That action was without my knowledge, and compels me to take this means of notifying all persons concerned - of what they ought to have

known before - that I can have nothing whatever to do with it.” (*Calaveras Chronicle*, April 15, 1871).

This early exodus from the project should have been an indication that something was awry. Judge Barclay’s stern warning certainly should have alerted people that something was gravely wrong with the whole endeavor.

500,000 Dollars!
\$250,000 GOLD GIFTS!
 To be distributed to the Holders
 of Admission Tickets.
GRAND MUSICAL FESTIVAL!
 TO BE GIVEN BY THE
Calaveras County
RELIEF ASSOCIATION,
 AT THE
Court House
SAN ANDREAS,
Monday, September 11th, 1871,
 FOR THE RELIEF OF THE
County of Calaveras, Cal.

The Board of Supervisors finding the County hopelessly involved, have resolved, by and through the advice of the Tax-payers, in Convention assembled, at San Andreas, April 3d, 1871, to adopt this measure, rather than resort to repudiation and utter bankruptcy.

200,000 Admission tickets
Will be Sold at \$2.50,
Gold Coin, Each.

The holder of Admission Tickets will be entitled to any prize that may be awarded to it.

BANKERS:
 PACIFIC BANK San Francisco.
 SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY BANK Stockton.
 B. F. HASTINGS & CO. Sacramento.

PREMIUMS:
 1 Grand Gold Coin Gift. \$20,000
 1 Gift of Gold Coin 15,000
 1 Gift of Gold Coin 15,000
 1 Gift of Gold Coin 10,000
 1 Gift of Gold Coin 7,500
 1 Gift of Gold Coin 5,000
 25 Gifts of \$1,000 each, Gold Coin, 3,500
 50 Gifts of \$500 each, Gold Coin, 2,000
 300 Gifts of \$250 each, Gold Coin, 25,000
 300 Gifts of \$100 each, Gold Coin, 12,500
 1000 Gifts of \$50 each, Gold Coin, 30,000
 1000 Gifts of \$25 each, Gold Coin, 15,000
 2400 Gifts of \$10 each, Gold Coin, 30,000
6,550 Gold Coin Premiums, \$250,000

BUSINESS MANAGERS:
 S. L. PRINDLE Chairman Board Sup'r.
 A. H. COULTER Supervisor 2d District.
 M. G. LEWIS Supervisor 3d District.
 J. F. TREAT
 ALEX WYLLIE } San Andreas.
 B. R. PRINCE } Altaville

By special permission, we refer to the following well-known citizens of Calaveras County, and the State at large:
 HON. A. C. ADAMS, Dist. Judge Mok. Hill.
 C. R. HOBBS, Ed. CHRONICLE do
 JOHN THORN, Sheriff San Andreas.
 W. A. WALLACE, Treasurer do
 J. C. SCHUBERT, Clerk do
 W. V. CLARK, Esq. do
 J. S. BEAVER, Esq. do
 J. G. SEVERANCE, Esq. Railroad and
 B. F. HASTINGS & CO., Bankers Sacramento.
 Geo. S. EVANS, Mayor do
 J. K. DOAK, Esq. do
 W. L. DOOLEY, Esq. Stockton
 HON. WM. HOGY do
 S. C. BOWMAN, Esq. San Francisco
 DR. LOUIS SCHER do
 GEO. CONGDON, 408 Cal. St. do
 WM. IRVINE, 282 Front St. do

The Gifts will be awarded in a precisely similar manner as at the Concert given in San Francisco, in aid of the Mercantile Library.
 The drawing will be under the management of well known citizens, selected by the Board of Managers.

GOOD RESPONSIBLE AGENTS WANT,
 ED, to whom liberal commissions will be allowed. Money should be forwarded by Express, or Drafts on any solvent Bank.
 Address all Communication to
M. G. LEWIS, Secretary
 Calaveras County Relief Association,
 San Andreas, Cal.
 apr29:td

This advertisement for the Calaveras Relief lottery appeared in the papers from April until October of 1871.

But endeavor they did. Fueled by public opinion, rousing orations from the newspaper, and a lust for gambling, the process continued. Within just weeks of the inaugural meeting, advertisements were appearing in the newspapers promoting the lottery.

“Well Known Citizens”

The lottery team quickly laid out the guidelines. Several meetings were held with potential creditors from San Francisco, extolled as business men of good character who had proven investments in Calaveras County. It was decided that 200,000 tickets would be sold at the price of \$2.50 each which was the going rate at the time for a lottery. By comparison, that one ticket would cost us \$32.00 today. The funds garnered from the sales would yield \$500,000. One half of the revenue would be used to fund the prizes, and the balance would go directly to the relief of Calaveras County’s debt. The number of prizes to be awarded was 6,558, which would yield a win in every thirty chances. These were very attractive odds indeed!! Prizes were to be distributed as follows:

PREMIUMS:

1 Grand Gold Coin Gift	\$20,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	15,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	12,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	10,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	7,500
1 Gift of Gold Coin	5,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	3,500
1 Gift of Gold Coin	2,000
25 Gifts of \$1,000 each, Gold Coin,	25,000
25 Gifts of \$500 each, Gold Coin,	12,500
50 Gifts of \$250 each, Gold Coin,	12,500
200 Gifts of \$100 each, Gold Coin,	20,000
300 Gifts of \$50 each, Gold Coin,	15,000
1000 Gifts of \$25 each, Gold Coin,	25,000
1500 Gifts of \$20 each, Gold Coin,	30,000
2450 Gifts of \$10 each, Gold Coin,	34,500
6558 Gold Coin Premiums,	\$250,000

The date of the drawing was set for September 11, 1871. Each lottery ticket was an admission ticket to the drawing, which was to be held at a “Grand Musical Festival”. It was the style to hold celebratory drawings around an entertainment attraction, modeled after the original Mercantile Library Lottery in San Francisco. The Calaveras lottery drawing was to be held at the

County Court House in San Andreas with the gala music festival to keep spirits high. It is quite doubtful that the managers of the lottery expected all 200,000 ticket holders to attend, but it is obvious from the newspaper accounts that a feverish crowd was expected. Advertising appeared vigorously throughout the summer, often next to ads for other lotteries being held elsewhere.

The entire team of Business Managers was listed in the Calaveras ad, consuming almost one quarter of the space allocated for the ad. The ad boasts a list of twenty-five business managers who are “well known citizens of Calaveras County, and the State at large”. It is interesting to note that almost half of the members are not from Calaveras County, and there are no less than eleven attorneys listed, as well as several county officials. It is also interesting to note that although Judge Adams had withdrawn his name from the proceedings his name continues to appear in the ads. Not so surprisingly one of these “well known citizens” was the publisher of the newspaper himself. The *Weekly Calaveras Chronicle* was printed in Mokelumne Hill, but edited and published by Charles Higby of San Francisco. Higby was an attorney related to the Honorable William Higby, a judge from San Francisco. Both Higbys practiced law in Mokelumne Hill and were listed as members of the lottery team. Perhaps this explains the San Francisco connection. It certainly explains why the newspaper was such an avid supporter of the lottery venture.

“Going Off Like ‘Hotcakes’ ”

The motivational editorials featured in the *Chronicle* continued to keep the issue alive. Almost every week there was another column extolling the virtues of the lottery and reminding every citizen of their obligation to do their part and buy their share of the tickets. “To assist and promote the enterprise by every means in their power, then, should be the first purpose of all our citizens” chided Higby on August 19, 1871. One group of anxious taxpayers were publicly embarrassed for hesitating to buy tickets quickly enough to satisfy the publisher. Grape growers were tired of the heavy taxes on their vineyards and apparently some questioned the credibility of the lottery. A \$2.50 ticket was a steep price to pay on top of already heavy taxes on their vineyards and citizens were being urged to purchase books of tickets. The editor blasted them in an ugly editorial shaming them for not doing their part. Higby even went so far as to remind

people of the sanctity of the lottery regardless of the election that year: "We do not wish to distract the attention of the people from the importance of the approaching election, but the scheme for the relief of this county should not be lost sight of in the excitement of the campaign." (August 19, 1871).

A common theme in the verbose editorials was the integrity of the system. Higby made grandiose statements such as "The enterprise is in the hands of gentlemen in whose integrity and business qualifications the utmost confidence is reposed..." (May 27, 1871). And "The Board of Managers is composed of practical business men, in whom the people have the fullest confidence..." (April 8, 1871). Early in the ticket sales the newspaper took it upon itself to educate the ignorant of the county. A detailed description explains the inevitability of the outcome because of the honesty of the process:

"First - it offers the only possible means by which the bankruptcy of the entire community can be avoided and the creditors of the county insured against the total loss of the claims they hold. Secondly - it is not gotten up for the advancement of individual interests, but for the purpose of removing the only bar [barrier] to the progress and prosperity of a county possessing great natural advantages that cannot be developed until taxation is reduced. Third - the scheme is endorsed by and will receive metallic support from every taxpayer in and creditor of the county, its management is vested in the Board of Supervisors and other prominent gentlemen chosen by the people, and such an apportionment of the money for gifts has been made that the chances of winning a prize are much better than in any scheme yet presented. ... So far as the success of the lottery is concerned, it is assured beyond the question of a doubt."

Higby was certainly assured of the success of the lottery beyond the question of a doubt. He ominously stated "If successful - and that it can be made so there is no question..." (August 19, 1871). He almost warned the people of Calaveras when he blared "The lottery must, and shall, succeed".

LOTTERY.—Tickets in the Calaveras lottery are going off like "hot cakes." People wishing to invest in the enterprise should hurry up for the chances will be all taken long before the day appointed for the drawing.

Newspaper Article – Motivational notes such as this appeared throughout the pages of the Weekly Calaveras Chronicle inspiring citizens to buy their tickets.

LAST NOTICE.

\$1,000,000!!

By authority of a Special Act of the Legislature of Kentucky, of March 13th, 1871, the Trustees of the Public Library of Kentucky, will give a

Grand Gift Concert

AT LOUISVILLE, KY,

On Saturday, December 16, 1871,

100,000 Tickets of Admission,

\$10 Each in Currency; Half Tickets, \$5;
Quarter Tickets, \$2.50.

Tickets will be sent by registered letter; the money for them may be sent by Postoffice money order, greenbacks, or draft.

Each ticket will consist of four quarters, value \$2.10 each. The holder is entitled to admission to the Concert, and to the amount of gift awarded to it or its function.

\$550,000 in Greenbacks,

Will be distributed to the holders of tickets, in gifts of from \$100,000, the highest, to \$100, the lowest—being 721 gifts in all.

The Concert is for the benefit of the

Public Library of Kentucky.

**The Citizens Bank of Kentucky
is Treasurer,**

And the Corporators and Supervisors are the Hon. Thomas E. Bramlette late Governor of Kentucky, and twenty-seven of the most distinguished and respectable citizens of the State.

The undersigned, late principal Business Manager of the very successful Gift Concert for the benefit of the Mercantile Library of San Francisco has been appointed Agent and Manager of this Grand Gift Concert.

The drawing and distribution will take place in public, and everything will be done to satisfy the buyers of tickets that their interests will be as well protected as if they were personally present to superintend the entire affair.

For Tickets or information, apply to

M. A. FRENCH,
Virginia City, Nevada

Enough have been sold to insure a drawing already. The office in Louisville will close November 30, to clean up. The drawing will take place December 17th and payment of gifts commence December 20, 1871.

nl:3w

CHAS. R. PETERS, Manager.

This advertisement was for another lottery held in Louisville, Kentucky. Note the numerous similarities with the Calaveras lottery. Was there a connection?

As the summer progressed people were advised to not delay and to get their tickets quickly before their chance was lost. "The demand for them is great and we very much doubt whether there will be any to be had for some time previous to the drawing" advised the *Chronicle* on June 24, 1871. The *Sonora Democrat* reported in September that "The sale of tickets has been rapid for the past few weeks; those desirous of trying their luck for ten or twenty thousand dollars, should secure their tickets without delay". If one only read these editorials, one would be led to believe that the tickets were selling well. Almost too well. Clearly a lot of money was changing

hands. But in August, the undertones of the editorials began to take on a different angle.

A New Twist

The sales of the tickets for the lottery for the Relief of Calaveras were by all impressions very successful. So successful in fact that citizens outside of Calaveras were scrambling for tickets. Early in the game neighboring counties had taken up the cry of support for our County as evidenced by positive articles in the *Sonora Democrat*, the *Pacific Coast Advertiser*, the *Amador Ledger*, and various newspapers in San Francisco, home of the creditors. Sales had extended well beyond Calaveras and it was quickly determined that additional outlets for tickets could be exploited beyond California. Sales offices had to be opened in the east. While the impact of the Calaveras Relief Lottery was reaching beyond California, advertisements began to appear locally for a similar lottery being held in Louisville, Kentucky. Apparently the Kentucky lottery was modeled exactly after the Calaveras Lottery, right down to the wording in the advertisements. The Kentucky lottery was being locally administered by a bank in Virginia City, Nevada, not exactly convenient for local purchase considering all of the attention it was receiving by the *Calaveras Chronicle*. The newspaper was bombarding the citizens of Calaveras with articles about the virtues of other lotteries, the results of the successful drawings, and constant advertisements for the Kentucky lottery, the Folsom lottery, and others.

In August the lottery hype took on a different tone. The advertisements for the Folsom lottery claimed "no more postponements" and "No tickets cancelled! No reduction in prizes!", and yet there was no explanation as to why it had been postponed, and why one should question that lottery's dates or prizes at all. Then on August 19 a small article appeared in the *Chronicle* that mentioned that the Louisville, Kentucky lottery "... had been withdrawn from the public...". The same article went on to note that despite having been withdrawn, the scheme was still in "full operation" as evidenced by continued advertisements. The *Chronicle* assured its readers that "... any enterprise that Charles R. Peters has the management of is bound to succeed." With endorsements like these, readers were sure to have confidence in the lotteries despite the obvious undertones. The Calaveras lottery was only weeks away.

Secure Your Tickets Without Delay.

NO MORE POSTPONEMENTS

THE PRIZES IN THE
FOLSOM GIFT CONCERT!
WILL BE AWARDED ON THE
1st OF SEPTEMBER 1871.

Agents must make full returns on the
29TH OF AUGUST.

Positively the Next Drawing to Take
Place in the State.

NO TICKETS CANCELLED!
NO REDUCTION IN PRIZES!

\$45,000 In Gold Coin!

In 667 Gifts, ranging from \$10,000
to \$20.

30,000 Tickets at \$2.50 Each.

BOARD OF MANAGERS

B. F. BATES,	J. H. BURNHAM,
J. O. BROWN,	J. KINNEY,
President, B. F. BATES,	Sec., J. H. BURNHAM.

TREASURER:

**B. F. HASTINGS & Co., Bankers,
Sacramento,**

With whom all moneys will be deposited, and
by whom all disbursements will be made.

This advertisement for another lottery in Folsom was also soliciting buyers at the time.

Last Chance!

"Do not procrastinate!" and "Last chance!" cried the paper in a last pitch to urge citizens to buy their tickets. In light of the recent postponement of the Folsom lottery and the withdrawal of the lottery in Kentucky people were again reminded of the integrity of the Calaveras lottery. "No cancellation of tickets, no reduction of prizes. The scheme will be drawn as advertised" assured the *Chronicle* of the Calaveras lottery in late August, having used wording very similar to that used earlier with regards to the postponed Folsom lottery. "Don't let those glittering prizes slip away from you..." urged the paper just two days before the date of the drawing.

Amazingly after all the heavy promotion the lottery was not held as planned. On September 16 the week following the appointed time for the drawing, the paper announced that the drawing had been postponed until November 13. It was merely explained that this delay was necessary to complete sales in the Atlantic cities, and to allow other "small fry" lottery enterprises also in process to get out of the way for the more important Calaveras lottery. On October 14 a lively editorial by Higby entitled *A Great Good From a Small Sin* scoffed at some who had begun to question the uprightness of the lottery. "Many piously inclined people who think all gambling except where the winnings go to a church, a sin ..." he shamed. He claimed that the sinful purchase of a lottery ticket was justifiable. "The good result will more than atone for the little sin". Ironically in the very same newspaper there also appeared a note about Brigham Young's pending trial for polygamy; an article mentioning the heavy losses sustained by insurance companies and their stock holders in San Francisco due to the Chicago fire; and an article endorsing the Hon Wm Higby of San Francisco for political office. One certainly could not fault the *Chronicle* for its variety and far reaching news coverage.

Little was said between September and the newly appointed date in November. It was not until November 11, just two days before the revised drawing, that an official statement from the lottery managers appeared in the paper explaining the delay. Why were they so quiet for so long?

Careful inspection of the various lottery advertisements reveals that they were all administered or underwritten by the same banks such as the B. F. Hastings & Co. of Sacramento. Perhaps the business managers of the various lotteries were also on the boards of directors

75,000 GOLD COIN.

A GRAND
GIFT CONCERT

WILL BE GIVEN AT THE
METROPOLITAN THEATER,
SACRAMENTO,

May 1, 1871,

—BY THE—

**Sacramento Pioneers & Sacramento
Library Associations.**

For their joint benefit to pay their existing indebtedness.

☞ **During the Concert 1,317
Gifts will be distributed among
Ticket-holders, amounting to
\$75,000 in Gold Coin, as follows:**

1 Gift of Gold Coin	\$15,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	\$15,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	\$15,000
1 Gift of Gold Coin	\$15,000
3 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$1,000 each	\$15,000
5 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$500 each	\$15,000
5 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$300 each	\$15,000
50 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$100 each	\$15,000
100 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$50 each	\$15,000
300 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$30 each	\$15,000
850 Gifts of Gold Coin. \$20 each	\$15,000

**1,317 Prizes, amounting to Sev-
enty-five Thousand Dollars.**

TREASURER:
B. F. Hastings & Co., Bankers,

With whom all moneys will be deposited, and
by whom all disbursements will be made.

60,000 Tickets will be Sold at
\$2 50, Coin, Each.

This Ticket will admit the bearer to the
Concert.

☞ The drawing will take place and the
Gifts be awarded in a precisely similar man-
ner as at the Concert given in San Francisco,
in aid of the Mercantile Library, and under
the joint supervision of a Committee of well
known citizens of Sacramento, and the officers
of said Associations.

☞ Persons at a distance can obtain Tick-
ets by sending Checks on any of the Sacra-
mento Banks, or Coin by Well, Fargo & Co.
Ten per cent. commission will be allowed to
persons sending for Fifty or more Tickets.
Commission paid in Tickets.

☞ All orders should be addressed to
CADWALADER, DAVIS & CO.,
Business Managers

**This advertisement for a lottery in Sacramento was also
appearing in the *Calaveras Chronicle*.**

for those banks? In November it was reported that the John Sime & Co. bank of San Francisco had shamefully collapsed and could only settle with its creditors at fifty cents on the dollar. B. F. Hastings & Co. was associated with that bank. Other banks were noted as having difficulties due to the losses suffered as a result of the Chicago fire. Stock values in local mines were declining. The reports in the paper projected a general air of economic unease making the success of the Calaveras lottery all that more imperative.

To the Public.

OFFICE OF THE CALAVERAS COUNTY
RELIEF ASSOCIATION, SAN ANDREAS.
September, 11th, 1871.

A LARGE NUMBER OF TICKETS TO our Grand Musical Festival for the relief of Calaveras county have been disposed of, yet, owing to circumstances not under our control, we are obliged to postpone the drawing till

Monday the 13th, of November

next, when, we feel confident the tickets will be sold, as the managers are in receipt of information from different parts of the Pacific States and Territories, and of the Atlantic States, of a ready demand for the tickets.

Respectfully,

S. L. PRINDLE,
A. H. COULTER,
M. G. LEWIS,
ALEX. WYLLIE,
J. F. TREAT,
B. R. PRINCE,

Board of Managers.

[slG:tf]

Notice of Postponement – This notice from the Business Managers of the Calaveras Relief lottery offered the only explanation as to why the lottery was delayed for two months. This notice appeared just days before all six of the managers were arrested.

Indictments

Two days after the date appointed for the Calaveras lottery drawing, all of the Business Managers of the Calaveras County Relief Association were arrested. Apparently the drawing was not even held. On November 15 a bench warrant from San Francisco caused the arrests of Supervisors Prindle, Coulter, and Lewis, and Business Managers Treat, Wyllie, and Prince. The men were rounded up and brought before Judge Adams on a Writ of Habeus Corpus. After the judge heard the charges he denied their application for a dismissal of the warrant, and each was remanded to the custody of the sheriff where they gave bonds of \$500 each with a promise to appear later and answer to the indictments. The *Chronicle* gave no further information. Almost as suddenly as the lust for the lottery had been born, the editorials stopped talking. As if to explain the lack of further explanation, Higby said "It is not deemed advisable to elaborate at present". Clearly this "well known citizen" was keeping quiet due to his own involvement in the scheme.

In the same paper where Higby decided to keep quiet there appears a personal article about Prindle. The

article notes that Prindle had just returned from a trip where "... for the past few months has been enjoying a visit to relatives and friends in the East... Mr. Prindle traveled pretty extensively through the Eastern and Middle states during his absence..." Apparently Prindle had returned from his extensive trip only days before the appointed day of the lottery drawing, and just in time to be arrested for his involvement. Why was Prindle traveling so extensively in the east? Perhaps he was responsible for the expansion of the lottery that had required the postponement of the drawing in September so that additional tickets could be sold beyond California. What is fair to say is that those remote eastern sales offices were operating under far less timely or instant communication that we enjoy today, and it is doubtful that those offices could have been closely monitored.

It is not known whether the other lotteries currently underway in California were held either. Other lottery schemes apparently had indictments as well that originated from San Francisco. It is surmised that the San Francisco banks, the creditors underwriting the lottery schemes, had come under question. The collective cases were put over until the next term of the San Francisco Municipal Court. The *Calaveras Chronicle* remained quiet on the subject for almost two months. Finally a small note appeared on January 13, 1872 that mentioned that the trials for the managers of the Calaveras lottery had been set for January 24th. They were to be arraigned on three indictments each before Judge Blake of San Francisco. The trial was postponed until February 6, and then again for the term of the Municipal court. Meanwhile the lottery matters in San Francisco had drawn the attention of the California State Legislature.

Legislation

When the state legislation passed the Mercantile Library Lottery Act in 1870 the intent had been to provide for a one time only limited lottery with very specific provisions. The Mercantile Library Association was given permission "... to give not more than three public entertainments or concerts..." at which prizes could be awarded. These prizes could be awarded "... by means of chance, raffle or other scheme of like character ..." provided that these events were managed and controlled by a Board of Managers, with the proceeds applied solely toward the debt of the library. Although this act amended

the Act to Prohibit Lotteries of 1851, it did not *repeal* the former act. Regardless, many communities in California and elsewhere chose to pursue lotteries. Indeed the citizens of California and elsewhere went slightly crazy with the lottery idea.

What we have gleaned from the pages of the *Calaveras Chronicle* is that lotteries began to fail across the country by mid-1871. We do not know if they failed from corrupt management, or due to the economic hardships of the underwriting bondholders. We do know that the six managers of the Calaveras Relief Association must have spent a miserable winter in 1871-72 awaiting word on their destiny.

In February of 1872 Senator Dyer proposed a bill to the California State Legislature to dismiss charges against lottery managers. By this time Higby had regained his voice as evidenced in an editorial where he supports the senator's bill. "It is an outrage to prosecute men for violating a statute which the Legislature virtually declared a dead letter... let the balance of the lotteryites go and sin no more" (February 17, 1872). Interestingly in the same paper Higby notes another bill pending before the state proposed by Assemblyman J. L. Gibson of Calaveras County. Gibson's bill was for the assessment and levy of taxes in Calaveras County, but the particulars were unknown to Higby at that time. Higby would have done better to research Gibson's bill than to rave about his friends' innocence.

On April 1, 1872 the California State Legislature passed a repeal of the Mercantile Library Act of 1870 which served to dismiss all charges pending against any persons pursuing lotteries ostensibly under the authority of that act. This new act was gratefully welcomed and known as the "Lottery Amnesty Act". Unfortunately this blanket dismissal of charges against the lottery managers did not come without its price for Calaveras County. Two days before the Lottery Amnesty Act passed, the State first passed an act entitled "An Act to Provide for the Redemption of the Bonded Indebtedness of Calaveras County". This act provided \$100,000 of financial relief from the state to Calaveras to assist in their bond debts. Where the Amnesty Act required only two simple paragraphs in which to conduct its business, the Calaveras Relief Act required fifteen detailed paragraphs of instructions over several pages. This relief act provided very particular instructions whereby the Auditor was to provide refunds for the lottery tickets, as well as the

Board of Supervisors was to levy a tax on the citizens for repayment of the \$100,000. A new tax was levied on the citizens "... of not less than ten cents and not to exceed twenty-five cents, on each one hundred dollars..." of taxable value. So a grand venture that had started out with the intent of lowering the tax rate for the citizens of Calaveras instead only served to increase it yet more.

The Business Managers remained quiet for six months until they issued a final report on August 31, 1872. The report detailed the funds received (\$3440.95) versus disbursements paid out (\$3615.00), leaving everyone with the impression that they themselves had even gone into further debt on behalf of the cause. They appear to try to redeem themselves as victims of forces beyond their control by the following interesting statement found in their report:

"This embraces all the transactions of this office. Thousands of tickets were distributed to agents throughout this State, Nevada, Oregon and other places, but as scarcely any returns have been made, we can form no idea of the number of tickets sold. Our agent at San Francisco reports an unwillingness on the part of sub-agents to make any settlement. We have paid out all that we have received, and a little more, and still there is a large amount due on our printing and advertising bills."

Something very wrong had happened with the lottery scheme. The tickets sold beyond California could not be accounted for. One would have thought that Prindle's trip back east the previous year had assured that all was under control, but apparently that was not the case. There remain many unanswered questions about the lottery. We do know that no drawing was held, no prizes were awarded, and the county's debts only worsened. But what prompted the arrests of the Business Managers? And where did all of the money go?

The lotteries of the 1870's kindled a hope for debt relief, and provided an interesting distraction from that liability. Some lotteries were successful in raising the desired funds, and some were not. Some were honest, and many more were not so honestly operated. But none in the state of California were as devastating and far reaching as that in Calaveras County. Research into this fascinating subject continues, but for now the mystery of the Calaveras Relief Lottery remains unsolved.

Calaveras County Historical Society

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The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museum while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058.

Museum Donations

The Calaveras County Historical Society wishes to thank the following persons who recently made donations to the Calaveras County Museum:

August 2000

Oz & Roberta Kenyon, San Andreas, CA
Branding Iron

November 2000

Carol Kennedy, San Andreas, CA

Pictures & scrapbook of Calaveras Airport

Ralph J. Merletti, Perris, CA

Merletti family history

John Gibson, Folsom, CA

The Italian Legacy in the Mother Lode

Cate Culver, Mountain Ranch, CA

Antique wood burning heater stove

TALENT SHOW!

The Calaveras County Historical Society invites you, yes you to come show your talent! That's right, we're having a talent show, with wonderful prizes! Why don't you come strut your stuff?

We know that everyone has a talent. Don't let that talent go wasted and unappreciated, when there are so many who could benefit with what you have to offer. Wouldn't you like to greet those crowds with your dazzling smile? Maybe you're the best envelope stuffer that ever got a mass mailing out the door. Or maybe you are the best house cleaner that ever dusted an artifact. Perhaps you lean toward entertaining and wish to lead eager visitors on tours of our County museum. There's always a spot for you if you want to staff the museum for a day. Whatever your special talents may be why don't you share some of that stuff with the Historical Society? The prizes and rewards are invaluable. Ask any volunteer why they do it, and they'll tell you how good volunteering makes them feel. So please give us a call at 754-1058 and get involved.

Come on down and strut your stuff and share your talent!!